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the Interdenominational

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VOLUME IX MADISON, N. J., SEPTEMBER, 1921 NUMBER 3

THE SPIRITUAL GOSPEL AND ITS INTERPRETATION*

Eusebius describing the origin of the Fourth Gospel says, "John, last, having observed that the 'bodily' had been exhibited in the gospels, exhorted by his friends, and inspired by the Holy Spirit composed a 'spiritual' gospel." This afternoon I wish to bring before you some aspects of this spiritual gospel in the light of modern research. These words of Eusebius remind us of that sentence in the opening paragraph of Plutarch's life of Alexander, "Accordingly, just as painters get the likenesses in their portraits from the face and the expression in the eyes, where the character shows itself, but make very little account of the other parts of the body, so I must be permitted to devote myself to the signs of the soul in men." The Fourth Gospel is pre-eminently the gospel of the signs of the soul of Jesus.

The discussion of this gospel raises some of the most intricate problems in the whole field of New Testament criticism and one is not surprised to find one critic of repute saying that the Johannine question is still in the forefront of those trials to faith and patience which form so large a part of our present discipline or to find as in the case of no other problem of the New Testament so many men delaying or suspending judgment.

It would have been more congenial perhaps for us this afternoon to sail our craft in the calm blue waters of the synoptic gospels or in the less calm waters of the Pauline Epistles or better still to have meandered pleasantly down the Nile among the papyri of Egypt but we thought it best to

* Matriculation Day Address, given Thursday, September 22, 1921, by the Reverend J. Newton Davies, B.A., B.D., Visiting Professor of New Testament Greek Exegesis.

launch out on this more troubled sea and that despite the warning of Shakespeare

The sea being smooth,
How many shallow bauble boats dare sail
Upon her patient breast making their way
With those of nobler bulk.
But let the ruffian Boreas once enrage
The gentle Thetis, and anon, behold
The strong-ribbed bark through liquid mountains cut
Bounding between the two moist elements
Like Perseus' horse: where's then the saucy boat
Whose weak untimbered sides but even now
Co-rivalled greatness? Either to harbor fled
Or made a toast for Neptune.

To flee to harbor would be cowardly, to co-rival greatness is certainly not our desire; let us hope that our boat is strong-ribbed enough to take us out on our voyage this afternoon and that we shall all be braced and invigorated.

Dr. Rendall Harris, in the introduction he wrote recently for Prof. Findlay's excellent book "Jesus as They Saw Him," said that the difference between modern methods of Bible criticism and those of 50 years ago was as great as between a Ford tractor and a primitive digging-stick. There are, it is true, some short-sighted individuals who, because of the mists in which they are enveloped, think the tractor is a destructive tank. The Ford tractor methods have been used over the fields of the Old Testament and we have harvested a splendid crop of guiding principles that will serve interpreters not for a decade or generation but for a far longer period. A wonderful degree of permanency characterizes the results obtained. The position in regard to the New Testament is not quite parallel but we do need to harvest guiding principles that will be as pillars of fire as we emerge from the bondage of what the Germans would call a "bibelfast" age to help us as we march to our new Canaan. For the discussion and interpretation of this great gospel many qualifications are indispensable and some of them we have only in a very limited measure:

1. Origen quaintly said that no one can apprehend the meaning of this gospel except he have lain on Jesus' breast and received from Jesus, Mary to be his mother also, which was only another way of saying that a genuine growing love is essential for under-

standing and insight into spiritual mysteries, or as Paul puts it, it is when we are rooted in love that we comprehend the length, breadth, height and depth of the love of God in Christ Jesus. Only those "who are knit in love gain that wealth of conviction that comes from insight and who learn that open secret of God the Father of Christ, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge lie hidden."

2. It is of supreme importance to acquaint one's self with the enormous amount of literature dealing with this gospel. To read all would take a life-time. Origen, Chrysostom, Lightfoot, Westcott, Sanday, E. F. Scott, Gardner, Brooke, Dean Inge, Jackson, Strachan are some of the names of those whose works we have endeavored to read. To go over the text again and again, with great care, is of supreme importance.

3. It is of importance also that the student of this gospel should ever keep in mind the wonderful part it has played in the enrichment of Christian character and in the missionary activities of the Church of Christ. Quite a volume could be written dealing with the gospel and missionary enterprise. There has recently been published a book called "The Sadhu," a most refreshing and inspiring account of an Indian Christian mystic and Evangelist. This gospel is his favorite, some day he hopes to write a commentary upon it. In it there is recorded how after a meeting in the Central Provinces, a native, an enemy of Christianity, bought a copy of St. John's gospel. After reading a sentence or two in the train he tore it into pieces and threw it away. The same day, the Sadhu learnt some time afterwards, a seeker after truth was going along the track. For six or seven years he had tried his hardest to find the truth but was not satisfied. On finding the torn pieces he read on one "everlasting life" and on another "The Bread of Life." This led him to purchase a New Testament in which he found our Saviour. The torn fragments of the gospel proved to be a piece of the living Bread, The Bread of Life.

The other day I came across the following letter of Wordsworth written in 1825. "What manifold reasons have you and I to be thankful to Providence.

The religion of gratitude cannot mislead us. Of that we are sure; gratitude is handmaid to hope and hope is harbinger of faith. I look abroad on Nature; I think of the best part of the species; I lean upon my friends and I meditate upon the scriptures especially the Gospel of St. John and my creed rises up with the ease of an exhalation yet a fabric of adamant."

That splendid poem of Browning's, inspired by meditation on this gospel, "The Death in the Desert," which some consider the best commentary on the Fourth Gospel, has this splendid close:

"See if, for every finger of thy hands,
There be not found, that day the world shall end,
Hundreds of souls, each holding by Christ's word
That He will grow incorporate with all,
With me as Pamphylax, with him as John,
Groom for each Bride! Can a mere man do this?
Yet Christ saith, This is he lived and died to do.
Call Christ, then, the illimitable God,
Or lost!"

Such testimonies could be increased a hundred fold.

The student of this gospel and of every book of the Bible will also do well to keep in mind Jerome's great saying, "If an offence come out of the truth better is it that the offence come than that the truth be concealed."

It may appear insignificant and trivial to some but to me it is of some importance that many of the noblest and finest Christians of the first century never saw the fourth Gospel, Stephen, James, Paul, Peter, to name only a few of the most illustrious, and that many of those vigorous churches who did such glorious things in the cause of Christianity never heard the inspiring words of this evangelist. It is not the views a man holds of the structure of this gospel or its authorship that determines the integrity and genuineness of his Christian faith. The only test that this gospel itself recognizes is loyalty to Him who inspired its writer.

Let us now leave these important generalities and pass on to some more detailed considerations.

1. Modern research overwhelmingly confirms the judgment of that able New Testament critic, Dionysius of Alexandria, who in 265 A. D. stated that he did not think the author of the Book of Revelation and the author of the Fourth

Gospel were one and the same person. This judgment may spoil the embellishments of a few sermons, but it serves as an essential starting point for our study of the Johannine Literature. This judgment is not only the result of a careful comparison of the language of the two books, both of which probably emanated from Ephesus, and were written about the same time, the Apocalypse in 96 A. D., and the Gospel between 90 and 110 A. D. Lightfoot himself in his Biblical Essays asserted it would be discreditable for any critic of sobriety and judgment to assign to this Gospel any later date than the end of the first century or the beginning of the second.

But the judgment is sustained by a comparison of the *ideas* of the respective books. What poles apart the authors are on the all important question of eschatology. The Apocalypse is saturated with those mysterious and wonderful symbols and figures that were the regular stock-in-trade of Jewish and Jewish-Christian apocalyptic writers. The Parousia is in the near future "He which testified these things saith yea: I come quickly. Amen: Come Lord Jesus!" To the author of the Fourth Gospel the Parousia is an accomplished fact. In the Fourth Gospel no Ascension is mentioned; there is no break between the Resurrection and the Resumption of His work on the part of the Risen Christ. "On the evening of that same day—the first day of the week—though the disciples had gathered within closed doors for fear of the Jews, Jesus entered and stood among them saying, 'Peace be with you!' and with these words he breathed on them and added 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' Instead of looking for Him in the clouds, they are to look for Him in their own hearts and in their little groups of men and women. To a church weighed down to the point of distraction by anxious waiting for the Parousia, driven to despondency and despair by disappointment and frustrated hope, this man of God with no uncertain sound declares that Jesus has never abandoned His people. The Glory of Christ is visible to all who have eyes to see. The coming of Christ is immediate, personal and permanent. The Christ of the Fourth Gospel stands among His followers ever throwing open the gates of new life to them. That is the message that the church of today needs to inspire it in the face of the stupendous tasks that await it.

2. Modern Research confirms the judgment of the church that the Gospel and the three Johannine Epistles are from the same writer. Many dissent from this, and say that the second and third epistles were written by the same writer as Revela-

tion, but Dr. Charles' elaborate and careful study confirms him in thinking that the second and third are more like the Gospel than even the first epistle. If we grant this, and we may well do so, we are confronted by this question, how comes it that the second and third have the following opening sentences:

Second John—The elder to the elect lady.

Third John—The elder to the beloved in Gaius.

Is it likely that one who had long enjoyed the dignified status of an apostle in the introduction of his letter would call himself an elder? That of course is a question for the church historians; but is there not here some solution to the perplexing question of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. There was a John the elder, mentioned by Papias, who lived at Ephesus. Is it possible that this man, a convert perhaps of Paul's who later became a pupil of the aged apostle after he left Jerusalem for Ephesus, from whom he derived the testimonies of an eye-witness, penned this matchless gospel? We think that there is a great deal to be said for this claim. The Apostle John had as much to do with the compilation of the fourth Gospel as Matthew had to do with the first gospel. If this solution could be established the following difficulties would be solved for many.

It is inconceivable to us that a man between 90 and 100 years of age should have composed a gospel so virile and powerful as this gospel—that is supposing John to have been between 20 and 25 when called. It would be without parallel in the annals of literature.

It would also solve this difficulty. Personally we have felt that the Apostle John had not intellectual qualifications great enough for the stupendous task of presenting the gospel in categories that would appeal to the Hellenistic world. He was great enough in courage and saintliness but not in intellect, and the Spirit of truth to make His greatest disclosures needs men of brain power as well as men of soul. I ask you to make an impartial study of all the allusions to John in the three first Gospels (his name is not mentioned in the fourth) in Acts and Galatians. The choice of him to be in the inner group was based on the score of seniority, we think. The only recorded sentence of his was the one he uttered when he asked for the fire to come down and burn up the Samaritan village for its stubborn attitude. In the Acts he is simply an understudy of Peter's and in the Epistle to the Galatians we are told that at the close of the Apostolic Conference John was appointed to take up work among the circumcised. He pre-

ferred to cling tenaciously to circumcision and the old shibboleths and wornout meaningless practices of Judaism rather than launch out into the new world that was white unto harvest, and this decision was made when he was between 45 and 50 years of age. On the contrary the writer of the fourth gospel is one of the greatest constructive and creative geniuses the Church has possessed and his Gospel has deservedly been described as the interpretative climax of the New Testament.

Another difficulty is also solved if we think of the author of the gospel as a pupil of the apostle. As most of you know the identity of the beloved disciple has been a matter of keen controversy among expositors. Recently a strong case was put up in the Espository Times arguing that he was Lazarus, others say he was Nathaniel, others, the rich young Ruler, the larger number, of course, say that it was John the Apostle. If so, how did he become an acquaintance of Caiaphas? Why was not he questioned by the maid as Peter was? How did this humble Galilean fisherman acquire a house in the confines of Jerusalem? Why does he conceal his name in this fashion? Modesty! but surely it was more immodest and lacking in taste to call himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved." If an admiring pupil used the designation of a revered master then we can understand the matter much better.

The greatest difficulty of the gospel lies in the realm of interpretation and not in the determination of authorship which, after all, interesting as it is, is only a question of secondary importance. To help us in solving these problems there are many things which if borne in mind will be of considerable value to us.

1. The degree of unanimity with reference to date, 90-110 A. D. and locality, Ephesus, is of great service to us in our endeavors to interpret the gospel. It is important then as we read the gospel to transport ourselves in thought and imagination not to the shore of lake Tiberias or to the streets of Jerusalem—that may be necessary occasionally—but the indispensable thing is that we should live ourselves into the life of Ephesus during those 20 years. The aim of the gospel is not to supply the church with a compendium of the facts of the life of Christ but to help the church to meet the peculiar problems of a world impregnated by Greek ideals and conceptions, a world dissatisfied and athirst for deeper satisfactions as evidenced by the rapid spread of the mystery religions, a world in which Judaic opposition to the young church was strong and stubborn.

Who will work out for us from original sources the condition of affairs in Ephesus from 50-150 A. D. treating in detail of the Baptist movement, Stoicism, Gnosticism, the Mystery Religions, the Judaic Movement, the Worship of Artemis and other local cults, the influence of Athens and Alexandria on the intellectual life of the city, the Christian Church and its activities. Such a work would be of invaluable service to the students of the Fourth Gospel. How far has the author reflected back the conditions of his own age upon the much simpler age of Jesus? Is it true, as one man has said, that the real hearers of the Christ of the Fourth Gospel are the members of the Church at Ephesus or that the Jews of the fourth Gospel are the Jews of Ephesus and not the Jews of Jerusalem?

Is the change in the presentation of the Baptist as compared with the synoptic records due to the position of honor given by many in Ephesus to the Baptist? His ministry is made to synchronize with that of Jesus to emphasize the contrast between them. The moral reformer of the Synoptics becomes a theologian and a mature Christian, and a witness to the Divinity of Jesus. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world"—"I have seen and have borne witness that this man is the son of God." "Such is my joy and it is complete." Is this the language of the experience of the Church of Ephesus? Were John the Baptist and others used as lay figures to give expression to these great declarations of faith?

Did the peculiar views of the Stoics in regard to the "ideal man" lead the writer to stress certain aspects of the life of Jesus. Jesus sweeps on to the stage of the fourth gospel trailing clouds of glory. He is fully equipped with grace, truth, life and light, to satisfy the needs of men. He is the conqueror of darkness, death, the world and of sin. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is self-sufficient (autarkes). The writer shows us Jesus and His disciples entering the Garden of Gethsemane but He emerges without experiencing the awful agony. Jesus in this gospel carries His own cross while in the other three he is assisted by Simon of Cyrene. Why is this? To men and women influenced by and impregnated with stoic ideals it is natural that the emphasis of the fourth gospel should be on the self-sufficiency of Jesus.

Can we learn anything about the Church at Ephesus that would help us to interpret the gospel. Was there a tendency there to over-emphasize the value of the Eucharist and to claim for it some pre-eminence that endangered the spiritual life. It is suggestive to us that in the midst of the Eucharistic discourse

—a discourse which presupposes the cross and several decades of Christian experience to understand the words of Jesus—you have the incident of Jesus walking on the waters to show that the presence of Jesus was not limited to the Eucharist but was very real in the storms and distresses of life. When the writer describes for us the scenes in the upper room we wait anxiously for the institution of the sacred rite and for the solemn words “Do this in remembrance of Me.” No word is mentioned about it but instead Jesus clothes Himself with a towel and washes the feet of the disciples as though the writer wanted to remind the Church of its duties and responsibilities which it was in danger of forgetting by unhealthy over-emphasis on the ceremonial of the Eucharist.

As Canon Rawlinson has said, the value of the fourth gospel as a historical document consists in this, that it reflects as in a mirror the Christianity of Asia Minor at the end of the first century, showing the church of later apostolic days, making its great affirmation over against the synagogue and that it sets before us in a work which for sheer spiritual discernment and beauty is unparalleled as an interpretation of the life of Jesus to which successive generations have set their seal upon the basis of a life's experience that is true.

To know the conditions in Ephesus is not enough for the interpretation of this gospel.

2. It is imperative that we should know something of the mentality, and the aims and methods of the great genius who wrote this book, a man of deep piety, enjoying a wonderfully intimate communion with Jesus, writing with the resurrection as a *fait accompli* and with seven decades of rich, glowing church experience behind him. His moving prologue and the closing words of his gospel “These things are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God and that believing yet may have life in His name,” together with the many gems of thought scattered throughout the work, notably the 16th verse of the third chapter—the words of which, God, love, world, sent, only begotten, believe, life, are the pivotal words of the gospel—all show that he is not a mere chronicler or one who accumulates material but rather one who has discerned the deeper meaning of the testimony concerning Jesus. His gospel is “the distillation of the life and teaching of Jesus from the alembic of the writer's own mind and from the crucible of his deep personal experience” and the corporate experience of the church.

The question we must ask, it has been said, in respect to the

fourth gospel is not whether the writer's picture is a literally true account of what Jesus said and did but whether it presents a true valuation of the person of Jesus. It was Schliermacher, I think, who first suggested the comparison between Xenophon's portrayal of Socrates in his *Symposium* and *Memorabilia* with that drawn by Plato in his *Dialogues* and *Phaedo* as one which would be helpful in the understanding of the distinction between the Synoptists and the writer of the Fourth Gospel. Dr. Percy Gardner in his "Ephesian Gospel" has worked out the parallel in greater detail. Xenophon, the soldier and practical man of affairs, seeks to give us the *ipsissima verba* of the great philosopher, vivid details of his mode of life and methods of conversation but even Xenophon in a discussion on the conduct of a military campaign ascribes to Socrates words that are evidently Xenophon's own. Plato, on the other hand, in his portrayal brings us into closer touch with the real Socrates though it is quite evident that the pupil puts into the lips of the master those thoughts which were the fruits of his meditation on his master's words. Though the parallel is not complete since, in the case of the author of the fourth gospel, the disciple is not greater than his master as was the case with Plato, but it is helpful and instructive. It is very difficult for us today with our passion for accuracy and scrupulous care in the recording of facts and the narrating of speeches to understand the methods used by classical historians and biographers in Greece and Rome. It has been said that the *pons asinorum* for the understanding of ancient literature is this fact, that it was quite legitimate and honorable for an historian or biographer to ascribe to a hero words or a speech composed by the author as suitable to the occasion. Many of the great speeches in the histories of Thucydides are his own composition and even Plutarch, a contemporary of the writer of the gospel, resorts to the same custom. This characteristic of ancient literature is not confined to Greek and Roman writers. Jewish historians resorted to the same practice as the historical books of the Old Testament clearly show. Is it necessary to cross this bridge in order to interpret aright the message of the fourth gospel?

How far, for example, are the discourses of the Fourth Gospel the actual words of the historic Christ or the inspired utterances of the Risen Lord? There are clearly two elements in the Fourth Gospel, the words and deeds of our Lord and the interpretation of them in the light of later Christian experience. Burkitt holds that the writer is probably interpreting

genuine sayings of Jesus in the light of the experience of the Christian Church from Pentecost onward. Dean Inge states, "The evangelist no more wishes us to believe that Jesus spoke all the words which he puts into His mouth than that he spoke Greek, but he does claim to convey the message of the incarnate and glorified Christ." Dr. Plummer in his articles on Dr. Sanday says of the author of the fourth gospel, "He wrote long after the events which he records, and the speeches which he inserts are sometimes not the actual words used but the expansions of them, giving the full meaning of what was said as it had come after many years of thought. Thus he gives us not history but meditation on what he had heard and seen as interpreted by the experience of the Church during half a century." Again, Dr. Percy Gardner asserts that "it was not the Jesus of Nazareth who spoke thus but the Exalted Christ who came to inspire the Apostles after the death on the Cross, who was the life and the spirit of the Church." Dr. Drummond, who has set up a stout defence for the Apostolic authorship, says "the writer himself could not have told what was said in the flesh and what in the spirit, nor did he care to make such an analysis—we may well withhold our hands from the seamless robe." Most of these men are careful, painstaking scholars and when we read the gospel in the light of their interpretation it becomes vivid and clear to us but such declarations give rise to a series of questions. We cannot keep our hands from the seamless robe. What are the actual sayings of the historic Jesus in the gospel? What are the sayings of the Risen glorified Jesus? Where do we find the inspired comment of the author? Is there a difference in value between a saying of the historic Jesus and the Risen Jesus? Such questions are easy to ask but difficult in the extreme to answer. The answer to such questions is engaging the serious thought of some of the best minds in the Church.

In our study of this gospel a question which has greatly interested us is, to what degree has the writer in his writing of the gospel been influenced by the love of symbolism which was so characteristic of the religious writers of that age, especially Philo and the Alexandrian school? We have worked out at some length the answer to this question as we consider it with idealism and mysticism an important key to the interpretation of this gospel, but we must content ourselves with just a brief summary of the results.

Coleridge has said that the reader of Milton must be always on duty; he is surrounded by sense, it rises in every line,

every word is to the purpose. These words are also very apt for the reader of the fourth gospel, for as Chrysostom has said, "Those who intend to gain any advantage from what they read must not pass even any small portion of the words, because most of the words though at first sight easy—may appear to have in their depths much hidden meaning. Origen has also said in a very pregnant, oft-quoted sentence, "Where writers of the Holy Scriptures were unable to speak the truth at once 'bodily' and 'spiritually,' i.e., at once literally and with a deeper symbolic significance, it was their method to prefer the spiritual to the bodily, the true spiritual meaning being often preserved in the bodily falsehood so to speak." We are all familiar with the very fanciful and fantastic interpretation of symbolism made by Origen and others, but this fanciful interpretation does not preclude the fact that behind many of the outward facts of this gospel the writer conceals truths of deep spiritual import.

To us numbers are mere numbers and nothing more, but to the church at Ephesus the numbers 666 and 606 were pregnant with meaning. The following, a papyri letter of this period: "Amerinnus thought upon his lady Hermania for good. Her honorable name is 45 or 1035. I love her whose name is 545," goes to show that numbers were significant. Many feel that behind the numbers of this book in several instances there is symbolic significance, e.g., that the five porches in John 5:2 are symbolic of the five books of Moses and the 38 years are significant of the wilderness journey and that the whole purport of the Bethesda story is to show how superior Christianity is to Judaism.

How fond the authors of the New Testament were of weaving in the numbers 7 and 3 into the schemes of their books and one often cannot help feeling that the author of the fourth gospel, who was so haphazard in his chronology, when he does give us some definite hour and time, it is often with a deeper reference. Origen claims "the number 10 is very sacred, not a few mysteries being indicated by it." When he comes to the 10th book of his commentary on this gospel he reminds the reader that he is to receive some special benefit from God, so many have felt that when the author adds that "it was the 10th hour" when two of the disciples of John the Baptist left him to follow Jesus it was not merely to give the time but to convey the idea that a great hour had struck in their lives, a turning point which was to be followed by wondrous results. Who has not felt behind that simple phrase at the close of events in the upper room as they were leaving, "and it was night," has a

far deeper reference than a mere note of time.

We will not stay to discuss what the Fathers called "the philosophy of names" in the gospel but just to say that Lightfoot was of the opinion that in the final commission given to the Apostle Peter that the thrice repeated patronymic "Simon Son of John" must be interpreted as "Simon Son of God's Grace" lovest thou me. The name and surname are symbolic foreshadowings of God's special favor to him in His call and commission. Many have been the conjectures with reference to the name Nathaniel. If the explanation is that he is Bartholomew then you have to explain why it has been changed to Nathaniel. There are some who think that Paul is hiding under the name "an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile" sitting under the unsatisfactory tree of Judaism, while others feel that he is an ideal figure.

The author views all things *sub specie aeternitatis* and this gives an air of half-reality to his description of local and temporal events. In his narrative of the miracles the author is far more concerned for their spiritual import than for the chronicle of the event. The miracle to the author is a *semeia* and not a *dynamis*, a transparency through which the glory of Jesus is visible. The significance of the incident at Cana is that it mirrors the power of Jesus to effect great and wonderful changes in the realm of character and in the life of the Church. He alone can bring color and brightness and enrichment to life. The feeding of the 5,000 is significant because it shows what Jesus can do to satisfy the deep-seated needs of men. The miracle of healing the blind is given to show, as the discussion which follows reveals, that personal experience is of transcendent importance in the Christian life.

Scenarios are power

What is the raising of Lazarus a sign of? Enshrined in the narrative like letters of gold beautifully jewelled are the words "I am the Resurrection and the Life" for ever made sacred to us by their occurrence in the burial service but because of that association in danger of having their immediate present meaning hidden. Jesus surely means by the words that those spiritually dead in whom the corruption of sin has done its deadly work, can be restored to life, joy and service.

The narratives of the Death and the Resurrection abound with symbolic significance. Why does the author change the date of Crucifixion from 15 to 14 of Nisan the night when the Passover lambs were slain, if not that he may, by working out the comparison between Christ and the Paschal Lamb, emphasize the sacrificial expiatory character of the Death on the

Cross? The writer sees in the counsel of Caiaphas in chapters 11:50 and 18:14, those words of unprincipled expediency—the utterance of magnificent prophecy. The superscription in Hebrew, Greek and Latin to this author is suggestive of the universal sovereignty of Christ.

The water and the blood that were shed from the side have been variously interpreted. Whatever the physiological facts are, the Evangelist lays great stress on the phenomenon as a sign. Many have felt that there is a symbolical reference to the two sacraments. Prof. Burkitt in his Gospel History and Transmission says that, according to I John 6-8 the living personality has in it three elements, spirit, water and blood. From the water we are begotten, by the blood we are sustained, and the spirit or breath is the immaterial element that enters at birth and leaves at death. According to this interpretation the Evangelist is concerned to defend the crucifixion of Jesus against the Docetic theory that only a phantom Jesus was crucified. Again Jesus on the Cross with unbroken limbs symbolizes the Paschal lamb.

The Resurrection narrative also is full of symbolism. The appearance to Mary is recorded to show that Jesus is the mainspring of the Christian life and the all-compelling motive for service. The main purport of the story when Jesus stands in the midst, though the doors were closed fast, and how fast they were readers of the Greek will appreciate, is that Jesus will prevail against all barriers and bulwarks, and will dispel all doubt, fear, and despondency; while the lovely story of the appendix, Chapter 21, is given to teach that without Christ, disappointment and failure will daunt and sadden, but when the church toils at His bidding, success attends her labors and her resources are never overstrained, and she will win all sorts and conditions of men, which is the symbolic significance of 153, the number of fish caught.

Much work on the gospel has yet to be done and some of it we hope will be done in this school, but along such lines as these indicated, unless we are greatly mistaken, lies the solution to the problems of this matchless gospel.



